

AN NIV FOR EVERY PERSON

April 19, 1997 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) - The New International Version is one of the most popular of the modern versions, and many who claim to be fundamentalists, even some fundamental Baptists, defend it as an accurate translation. The publishers claim that the NIV has sold 100 million copies.

Since 1995, there is not one NIV, but a multiplicity. If one accepts the claim that the Bible must be continually retranslated into contemporary English, there is no end to the change and innovation that result. Instead of a settled and sure Bible that can be accepted by God's people and used authoritatively as the inspired Word of God, you have a never settled, always-changing Bible. That is what the creators of the New International Version have given the English-speaking world.

Two new editions of the NIV have appeared in the last two years.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL READER'S VERSION (NIrV) was published by Zondervan in 1995. This is a simplified NIV aimed at a third-grade reading level. (It also incorporates inclusive language techniques.) The methodology which produced such a Bible is called "common language," and it is used widely by missionary translators in various countries around the world. The United Bible Societies (an organization composed of more than 100 national Bible societies, such as the American Bible Society, the Canadian, and the British) produce very few "formal equivalency" versions which strive for a literal translation of the text. The majority of the UBS translations today are "common language." These aim the translation at the average reading level of the target audience. If the people are largely illiterate, the Bible is translated at a very low reading level, such as the third or fourth grade level. The UBS versions are also "dynamic equivalency" as opposed to "formal equivalency." In other words, they do not aim to translate "word for word" but "thought for thought." This new methodology might sound reasonable in light of the lack of literacy in many parts of the world, but it is impossible to translate the Bible accurately by using such a method. The fact is that God did not write the Bible at a third-grade level, and if a translator forces the Bible into this level he must change it. We do not believe any man has the right to change the Bible. It is God's Word. Who is man that he can change or modify or simplify the words of the Eternal God? What profane audacity! The Bible translator's responsibility is to translate God's Word accurately and perfectly, using the preserved Hebrew and Greek text. It is the teacher's job to explain the Bible. If people cannot understand the translated Bible, let us teach the people how to read and give them dictionaries and Bible study tools and instruction. We are not to bring the Bible down to men's level, in the sense of simplifying it so the unsaved and illiterate can easily understand it; we are to bring men up to the Bible by teaching them the Gospel so they can be saved and have the Holy Spirit to illumine them, and by patiently helping them understand God's Word. (We have discussed these things at length in our book *Dynamic Equivalency: Death Knell of Pure Scripture*, available from Way of Life Literature.)

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE EDITION was published by Hodder and Stoughton in England in 1995. The publishers of the NIV have stated that they are not certain whether or not it will be published in North America. The British edition of the NIV aims to remove language which fails to make the distinction between men and women that modern western culture requires. "Brethren" is replaced by "brothers and sisters"; "man" is replaced by "humankind" or "people"; etc. Consider a few examples:

PSALM 8:4

KJV: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE NIV: "What are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?"

PSALM 34:20

KJV: "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE NIV: "He protects all their bones, not one of them will be broken."

This translation corrupts a key prophetic passage. Psalm 34:20 refers to Christ and the fact that His bones were not broken on the cross. John 19:32-36 was a direct fulfillment of Psalm 34:20. The inclusive language NIV changes the singular masculine pronoun "his" to the plural pronoun "their," thereby destroying its prophetic significance.

LUKE 17:3

KJV: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE NIV: "Rebuke a brother or sister who sins, and if they repent, forgive them."

JOHN 6:44

KJV: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE NIV: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day."

JOHN 14:23

KJV: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE NIV: "Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

This is typical of the incredible perversion of Scripture represented by the inclusive language NIV. The singular pronouns are changed to plural. Christ's sweet and lovely promise to individuals is rendered ineffective by the change to general plural pronouns. Further, "my words" is changed to "my teaching," thus rendering Christ's emphasis on the words of Scripture ineffective by replacing it with the more general idea of teaching.

REVELATION 3:20

KJV: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE NIV: "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me."

Again, Christ's tender promise to individuals who receive Him is destroyed by the corrupt inclusive language rendition.

We believe the inclusive language NIV is a response to the pressure from clamoring feminists and their sympathizers, though the NIV publishers deny that this is the case. The NIV Committee for Biblical Translation (CBT) has been working on the inclusive language edition for years. Larry Walker, a member of the NIV's CBT, noted that pressure for such a version came from women who "felt left out" by the traditional language. Pressure also came from the publishers of the NIV in England (Hodder and Stoughton). "In England, sales of the New Revised Standard Version, a unisex language revision of the RSV, put such pressure on the NIV that Hodder and Stoughton demanded a new version in order to compete" (World, March 29, 1997, p. 12). Thus we see the money factor, which plays such a large role in the modern Bible version issue.

The publishers of the NIV claim they are not changing the Word of God to conform to feminist pressure. They claim that their goal always is "to produce a thorough, precise, accurate, reliable, and reverent translation." When *World* magazine (P.O. Box 2330, Asheville, NC 28802) published an article in the March 29, 1997, issue entitled "Femme Fatale: The Feminist Seduction of the Evangelical Church," and exposed the NIV's agenda of producing different types of Bibles for various markets, the NIV publishers responded with angry notices on the Internet at the Zondervan web site [which they removed after several days], in which they denounced the editors of *World* magazine in very harsh terms and implied that the article was dishonest. We believe, though, that the article was balanced and fair (though we would differ from *World* magazine's position on Bible versions and a number of other issues). The deception was not on the part of *World* magazine in

exposing the NIV's agenda and connecting it with the larger issue of feminist influence in "evangelical" churches today; it was on the part of the NIV publishers in attempting to deny that they have an agenda other than strict faithfulness to the Word of God.

Let me ask this question: If the NIV publishers are committed solely and strictly to translating the Word of God faithfully, why did they change "brethren" to "brothers and sisters" in the British inclusive language edition? The Greek text does not say "brothers and sisters"; it says "brethren." Strict and accurate faithfulness to the Scriptures requires the translation of "brethren." Those who change this to "brothers and sisters" are changing the Word of God, and no amount of blustering on their part can change this fact. (Of course, we are ignoring, for the moment, the fact that the NIV is translated from a corrupt Greek text to begin with.) The NIV publishers claim that they are not promoting "unisex" with their inclusive language version. They boast that they do not change "our father" in reference to God to "our father and mother," as some more extreme inclusive language versions do. Likewise, they boast that they do not change "son of God" into "child of God." I ask, Is it more righteous to change God's Word a little than to change it a lot? Is it more righteous to change "brethren" to "brothers and sisters" than to change "son of God" to "child of God"? I do not think so. I do not think that man has the authority to change God's Word even a little. Of course, I might be wrong. Perhaps the Lord is not very concerned about the details of His Word. Perhaps He will overlook these matters. Perhaps Proverbs 30:5-6 does not mean what it says: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

Let me ask another question. If Zondervan is so concerned about charges that the NIV inclusive language edition is a "unisex" Bible, why do they publish the New Revised Standard Version, which is unmistakably and radically a unisex version? Thousands of verses have been changed in the NRSV to incorporate modern, politically-correct feminist ideas of language. Why get up in arms about charges of unisex changes in the NIV when you publish a version which goes even further in the unisex direction?

Friends, I am glad that God has given me a dependable Bible in the English language, and that I don't have to base my Christian life upon the ever-changing world of the modern versions. When I stand on the Authorized Version I am standing on a translation which is the product of an intensive series of scholarly revisions beginning with the masterly version of the martyr William Tyndale and ending with the unparalleled committee appointed by King James. It came from the fires of persecution. It was created at the apex of the development of the English language. It has stood the test of time, and I have found that those who want to understand it can do so. Every type of Bible study tool is available to help people understand the Authorized Version.

I am also glad I have a church which stands in the old paths and does not entertain every innovation which comes along, that has an absolute Biblical authority in the Authorized Version, and has, therefore, true biblical unity of mind and heart in that every member accepts the same Bible standard. Those who don't like absolute Biblical authority are delighted with the modern versions. The ecumenical crowd loves the modern versions. Rome loves the modern versions. The modernist

loves the modern versions. The cults love the modern versions. New Evangelicals love the modern versions. The charismatic crowd loves the modern versions. An absolute "thus saith the Lord" has been replaced with "some manuscripts say this and some say that and we aren't absolutely sure of anything but we are definitely scholarly." Every man can be his own little god and can pick and choose among the plethora of versions the "Word of God" which feels right for him. That's not for me, and I trust it is not for you, either, dear reader. Stand in the old paths. You won't regret it.

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